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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3703

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2446 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4811
FAX: (202) 225-8941

DISTRICT OFFICE:
729 N.E. OREGON STREET
SUITE 115
PORTLAND, OR 97232
(503) 231-2300
FAX: (503) 230-5413
website: blumenauer.house.gov

December 2, 2005

Mr. Steven J. Wright, Administrator
Bonneville Power Administration
905 NE 11th Street
Portland, OR 97232

Ms. Melinda Eden, Chair
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
851 SW Sixth Avenue, Suite 1020
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Wright and Ms. Eden:

As both the BPA and NPCC deal with report language contained in the FY 06 Energy and Water Appropriations bill addressing the Fish Passage Center (FPC), we wanted to make sure you were aware of our views on this matter as well as an important colloquy that took place on the Floor of the Senate. We opposed the report language and were disappointed that the Senate chose to interfere in regional decision-making, especially since there are no federal appropriations involved in the operations of the Bonneville Power Administration or the Fish Passage Center. The funds involved are strictly those of regional rate-payers.

As you move forward with implementing the language, we hope that you keep the following points in mind.

First, it should be acknowledged that it is only report language and does not have the force and effect of law. Second, the language does not supersede the Northwest Power Act or the provisions of the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, adopted under the authority of the Northwest Power Act, with respect to funding coming from BPA. Senator Pete Domenici, the Chairman of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee made this point clear in a colloquy on the floor of the Senate regarding the Fish Passage Center when he said:

We do not intend this language to supersede the Northwest Power Act or the Council's fish and wildlife program. (Congressional Record, November 14, 2005, Page S 12744)

The Council adopted the 2003 Mainstem Amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Program unanimously after extensive public hearings that occurred over a two and a half year period. The Amendments unambiguously direct that the Fish Passage Center should continue to be funded by BPA. In light of this

direction and to ensure the success of the new program, it is important that the BPA continue to fund the Fish Passage Center's replacement.

In addition, as the Fish Passage Center is reconstituted pursuant to the report language, it must be consolidated and maintained as a single entity in one office and the state and tribal fishery managers must play a primary role in reorganizing it. Again, there is ample support for this perspective contained in Senator Domenici's floor statement:

Certainly both the Bonneville Power Administration and the NPCC are expected to work closely with the State and tribal fishery managers in determining a suitable entity that could take over these functions so that the fishery managers, including the tribes, continue to receive independent analyses as they have in the past.

Parsing out the Center's existing functions to multiple organizations would be less effective, inefficient, and would not be "seamless" as recommended by the language. It would be difficult to imagine a more efficient process than that now implemented by the FPC team – a group that produces detailed analyses and reports with only 11 employees and a budget of only \$1.3 million a year. The key now is to find the most appropriate place to house a center performing the functions called for in the 2003 Fish and Wildlife Program and to ensure there is a governing body using protocols acceptable to the region.

We have received correspondence from the states and tribes in the Columbia Basin indicating strong support for the FPC and affirming that managing the fishery resource without the Center's data and analysis will be difficult if not impossible. The cooperation between all fishery managers and BPA is essential as the region deals with the remand on the Basin's Biological Opinion. It would therefore be difficult to imagine a worse time to eliminate the most important source of technical information upon which the managers rely.

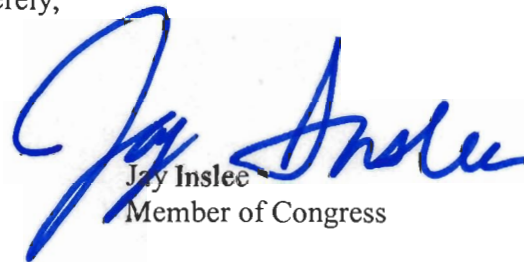
In addition to the state and tribal fishery managers, it is clear that the FPC has been a reliable and trusted source for the public as well. During the first six months of 2005 the FPC website received 3,207,552 visits and 43,000 information downloads. That's almost 18,000 hits and 238 data downloads a day. The FPC clearly is an important tool used by thousands throughout our region.

Attached are excerpts from the statements we placed in the Congressional Record after learning of the adoption of the report language. We would hope your organizations keep us informed as you move forward with this issue.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jay Inslee
Member of Congress

Enclosures